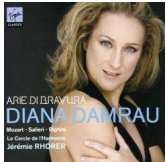


Diana Damrau - Arie di Bravura (2007)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 09 November 2013 16:52 -

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1.- SALIERI: *Cublai, gran Khan dei Tartari* – “*Fra I barbari sospetti*” 2.- RIGHINI: *Il natal d’Apollo* – “*Ove son? Qual’aure io spiro*” 3.- SALIERI: *L’europa riconosciuta* – “*Numi, respiro*” 4.- RIGHINI: *Il natal d’Apollo* – “*Ombra dolente*” 5.- MOZART: *Magic Flute* – “*O zittre nicht*” 6.- MOZART: *Magic Flute* – “*De Holle Rache*” 7.- SALIERI: *Cublai, gran Khan dei Tartari* – *D’un insultante orgoglio*” 8.- MOZART: *Lucia Silla* – “*In un instante*” 9.- SALIERI: *Der Rauchfangkehrer* – “*Basta, vincesti*” 10.- SALIERI: *Semiramide* – “*Sento l’amica speme*” 11.- MOZART: “*Basta, vincesti*” 12.- SALIERI: *L’europa riconosciuta* – “*Quando piu irato fremo*” 13.- SALIERI: *La finta scema: “Se spiegar potessi appieno”* Diana Damrau – soprano Le Cercle de l’Harmonie (Ensemble) Patrick Beaugiraud – oboe Alexis Kossenko – flute Jani Sunnarborg, Peter Whelan – bassoon Thomas de Pierrefeu – double-bass Jérémie Rhorer – conductor

I know Diana Damrau’s voice from a couple of complete recordings. With this background I expected pinpoint accuracy, easy delivery, beautiful but fairly thin tone with some edge to it, well controlled vibrato, expressive readings and good enunciation. I got what I expected on this recital – as far as I know her first solo disc. This is highly accomplished music-making, technically infallible and engaging.

The title of the disc “Arie di bravura” is certainly apt since every piece is a demonstration of stunning vocal fireworks, but this doesn’t imply that the music is musically vacuous. What is more the selection we are offered is mostly un-hackneyed. Even the Mozart items, apart from the Queen of the Night arias, are far from standard. When it comes to Salieri he is probably better known, not least through the film *Amadeus*, for his part as a rival and once supposed murderer of Mozart than for his music. Righini may not even be a name to some readers. Much of this music has been collecting dust in archives for more than 200 years. Diana Damrau says in the booklet that when she was searching material for this disc she “was provided with around 50 kg of illegible handwritten orchestral scores of masterpieces that had never or rarely been performed”.

I agree with her that this is highly attractive music and it is a shame that it has been hidden away for so long. Salieri's music has been performed and recorded before, even complete operas. I have a Falstaff by him that may not be his masterpiece but it has a great deal to offer. It is well-crafted music and inspired too. But the two Righini arias were the real finds, especially the second of them (tr. 4), which is an evocative piece with sparse 'minimalist' accompaniment, over which the soloist sails in weightless cantilenas, expressing longing for death.

I mentioned Ms Damrau's expressiveness and in the two arias from Die Zauberflöte - music that I have heard an infinite number of times - she made me listen anew. She creates a touching portrait of this evil but basically unhappy woman, and even manages to avoid making a show of the stratospheric excursions.

I believe that Salieri had the great misfortune to be contemporaneous with Mozart and thus unfavourably compared to the younger composer. Time and again on this disc one registers how good he was, D'un insulante orgoglio from Cublai, gran Khan dei Tartari (tr. 7) perhaps the best example. It is a two part aria, starting dramatically with a slow and lyrical second part. Even Mozart would have been proud to have written a piece like this. His aria from Der Rauchfangkehrer, a setting of a Metastasio text, is both beautiful and evocative. Interestingly Mozart set the same text in his concert aria K295a, which is also included on this disc and invites comparison. Like so many of his concert arias this is marvellous music and the only reason why these pieces are not well known is the fact that they are concert arias with no known connection to a story. Most of us are unaware of his early opera Lucio Silla, but we instinctively feel that this is dramatically effective music, written by a 16-year-old! It too is littered with coloratura.

The last two Salieri arias are also virtuoso pieces of the highest order, leaving the listener breathless and wondering how Diana Damrau can sing them without losing her breath.

The orchestra, playing on period instruments, was new to me. Their playing is spirited and assured and together recording engineer, orchestra, conductor and singer have made a disc that is superb in all respects. There is a good essay, Prima la voce, on the music and full texts and translations are included. ---Göran Forsling, musicweb-international.com

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